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ABSTRACT

As socio-cultural imperatives change, as political agencies reassess their priorities, and as the demographic pattern of society fluctuates, Canadian community colleges must redefine their roles in the context of their history. Most provincial college systems have enjoyed less than 20 years of evolution. However, it is not simply a lack of maturity they must combat, but a more critical problem associated with the conflicting conceptual roots from which they grew; that is, they embody a North American popularist approach to education within a more conservative and elitist climate reflective of British educational tradition. The colleges were created as a democratizing agent, to provide technological and vocational training to meet the needs of a changing economy, to generate political and social change, and to offer important community resources, particularly in rural areas. To maintain these reformist ideals and commitment to community needs, in light of the social changes brought by the 1970's, community colleges must adopt essential strategies for survival, including: (1) establish their identity, mission, and mandate; (2) respond to national priorities by mounting new programs, meeting the needs of special groups, and developing cooperative ventures with industry; (3) seek a new style for meeting the demands of the workplace and for providing learning opportunities; and (4) document the social and economic benefits that accrue to communities in which the colleges are present. (DAB)

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The Canadian Community College in the Eighties

- Strategies for Survival -

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Abstract

This paper is concerned with an analysis of the strategies which the community college systems in Canada must adopt if they are to survive without compromising their fundamental goal orientation during the coming decade. In an attempt to place the problems of the colleges within a broader perspective the paper will open with a short discussion of the conflict between value systems which is characteristic of the development of certain socio-cultural institutions in Canada. The value systems which are described were also present in the evolution of the community college concept, and are important in analyzing the strategies which are outlined later. A section of the paper is devoted to an historical description of the social and political forces which created the community colleges. This will be followed by reference to data gathered in recent research studies which focus on the current status of the colleges. Finally, the paper examines the essential strategies which colleges need to adopt in the coming decade if they are to survive the economic, political and social pressures which threaten to force the colleges to abandon the innovative and idealistic principles on which they were established.

The Canadian Community College in the Eighties

- Strategies for Survival -

Introduction - The Canadian Context

The 1980s have ushered in new challenges to the post-secondary educational system in Canada. After a certain complacency created during the expansionary period of the sixties and continued even during the relative stability of the seventies, the system must now attempt to accommodate drastic financial constraints and continuing uncertainty about its credibility with the wider community. While all institutions within the system will be compelled to explore new program initiatives as well as new forms of organization and new techniques to improve their public image, the task will be more difficult for the community colleges than for the universities.

In Canada the colleges are products of the post-war era. In fact, most provincial college systems have enjoyed less than twenty years of evolution (Dennison, 1981) and their unique character is still largely unknown to the general public. However, it is not simply a lack of maturity which colleges must combat, but an additional and more critical problem associated with the conceptual roots from which they grew. In essence, community colleges embody a philosophy of tertiary education that is largely foreign to Canadian tradition. While this specific assertion requires a more complex explanation, which will be developed later in this paper, there is a wider context in which this anomaly exists, a phenomenon similar in several respects to many of Canada's other social institutions.

In order to better appreciate the techniques which Canada's community colleges must develop to ensure their viability during the 1980s, some selected examples of the broader issue referred to above are worthy of note. The character of Canada in the 1980s has been formed through the interaction of certain historical realities together with the contemporary values which prevail in North American society. In much the same way as an individual's development is a product of hereditary and environmental factors, Canada's societal values stem from their roots in the British and French tradition and in the powerful impact of America's cultural environment. Nowhere is this fact more evident than in the recent forging of a Canadian Constitution which attempted to preserve elements of Britain's parliamentary tradition along with the elevated role of the judiciary as in the process of American government. The inclusion of an entrenched Charter of Rights stirred as much controversy over its role in Canadian tradition as with its potential for the protection of individual freedoms.

The management of public affairs in Canada tends to reflect a balance between centralization of authority, which characterizes certain aspects of the British tradition, and the historical trend towards decentralization as practiced in the United States. Greater centralization is more inevitable under Britain's unitary form of government than is possible under a system which involves the sharing of power with federated states. Public agencies in the United States, such as law enforcement, health care and education, tend to be administered at the local government level, rather than by centralized bureaucracies.

Again, Canadian policy in this respect is ambivalent, incorporating both the British and the American approaches.

While few would deny the reality of cultural values which are peculiarly either British or American in origin, there is ongoing debate across this country as to whether a distinctive Canadian culture exists at all. (Hodgetts, 1968; Symons, 1975) Much of the focus for the debate has centred upon education, not only as a potential repository for Canadian values, but as an instrument for the transmission of the nation's cultural heritage.

In recent years even the Canadian university community has been affected by the conflicts created through the impact of different value systems. Faculty disputes with administration over tenure issues have reflected the contrast between the traditional British notion of "natural justice" and the more recently acquired concept of "due process" as practiced in the United States. As in so many other societal areas, the Canadian version will be forged from both. Even the new challenge to educational institutions, "accountability", has proved to be a source of controversy, more so in its form than its legitimacy, largely because of its implications for autonomy in the university tradition, on one hand, and its concern for responsible applications of the public dollar on the other.

Post-Secondary Education Within the Canadian Context

Prior to World War II, higher education in Canada could be described as founded primarily upon the British model. The universities,

which effectively formed the entire system of higher education, were usually small, highly selective in student admission and curricular design, and relatively autonomous. Many, particularly in Eastern Canada, were church related and privately endowed. The remaining institutions which could be called post-secondary were vocational and agricultural schools, usually under direct provincial and public control. Until the 1960s, Canada did not follow the American model which embodied a more egalitarian and democratic approach to post-secondary education through the development of multi-purpose, highly accessible alternatives to the traditional universities. (Blocker, Plummer, Richardson, 1965; Monroe, 1972)

In the early 1960s in Canada, a combination of factors produced a plethora of proposals for the creation of provincial college systems based to some extent upon the United States model, an innovation which would dramatically change the design of tertiary education. (Dennison, 1979) In the early stages of the proposals, the reactions from both educators and the general public were mingled with controversy. To many critics the new institutions were unacceptable on academic grounds in that their design was perceived as being inconsistent with the traditionally accepted model of a post-secondary institution in Canada and, in consequence, their educational quality was suspect.

Nevertheless, college systems did develop in most provinces but the status enjoyed by Canadian universities was not extended to the new institutions. In effect, while colleges faced many of the same constraints upon their development as did the universities, far more

pragmatic arguments were advanced to justify their existence. This particular fact has had an important influence upon the strategy which colleges must adopt to ensure their survival in the next decade.

As in many other social and political institutions in Canada, the colleges formed during the past twenty years embody a North American popularist approach to education within a general climate of opinion which reflects the more conservative and elitist philosophy characteristic of British educational tradition. (McConnell, 1973) Clearly this contradiction creates a more difficult task for the colleges in finding a clear and easily defensible rationale for their continuation in the future.

Community Colleges - the raisons d'être

Before examining the strategies which community colleges might adopt to evolve and hence successfully survive in the 1980s it is necessary to outline some of the factors which led to their creation. Many of them are highly pragmatic--a factor which no doubt influenced the techniques used to ensure the colleges' future.

The college as democratizing agent. As public approval of the "elitism" of the universities began to erode after World War II, it became evident that if educational opportunities beyond high school were to be expanded either the universities would have to increase in size and number or alternative institutions would have to be created. Actually, both options were followed, but the colleges, in adopting a multi-purpose curriculum with a priority upon "open" admission, did

attract a much wider cross-section of society, in socio-economic terms, than had previously enrolled in education beyond secondary school. (Dennison, et al., 1975) During the same period economic studies by government agencies projected an attractive return from investment in tertiary education. The influence of this research upon the development of new institutions was considerable. (Stager, 1982)

This broadening of the population base engaged in tertiary education (commonly referred to as the "democratization" of educational opportunity) became an attractive feature of the new public community colleges. In political circles the results were highly popular, which accounted for much of the financial and other support which the colleges enjoyed in their early years. In addition, by establishing a multi-purpose curriculum, the colleges effectively eroded the traditional segregation of academic, technical, vocational and general education into separate institutional settings. The process of democratization was thereby extended, as students of very different educational backgrounds, ages and future aspirations, intermingled within a common campus environment.

The college and the labor market. The expansion of technology in the post-war period created a realization at various levels of government that more and better technical and vocational training beyond secondary school was mandatory if a qualified work force was to supply the needs of the changing economy. No longer in an increasingly more technological society was it practical to "learn on the job". (Davis, 1966) Furthermore, the reluctance of government to depend upon the importation of skilled labor from outside Canada created additional

shortages in the pool of qualified manpower.

The colleges became important agents for training a new work force and, indeed, many were created primarily for that purpose. However, given the extraordinary difficulties in forecasting manpower needs, the post-secondary educational sector has never been completely successful in its training function. Nevertheless, the issue is constantly under review as both the colleges and government agencies attempt to honor their particular mandates to meet both new and traditional needs of the labor market.

The college as an instrument of political change. The use of education by governments as an instrument for bringing about socio-political change is well known. The community colleges, with a wide representation of society within their student populations, have played a critical role in seeking political goals and in generating social change. In Quebec, the Collèges d'Enseignement Général et Professionel (CEGEP) became part of the mechanism whereby the French-speaking majority gained much greater access to both the universities and the skilled labor force of the province. In so far as reform of the educational system was vital in the plan to increase the influence of the French-speaking majority in the power structure of the state, the new, democratic and radical colleges were to become a major ingredient in the reform process. (Parent, 1963) The effect, in one decade, was a new balance of power in Quebec society which corresponded with the goals of the "quiet revolution".

In Saskatchewan it became clear to government that if it wanted to

halt the migration of the rural population into the cities, with its deleterious effect upon the farm-based economy, a key factor would be a revitalization of the quality of life in the rural communities. The community colleges became a means for this revitalization and they were planned, structured and administered with this goal in mind. The results have been gratifying to government and Saskatchewan society. (Pepper, Note 1)

The college as a community resource. Local governments tend to encourage the development of colleges in their communities arguing, with good reason, that they also bring substantial economic benefits. In addition, the faculty and the programs which the colleges sponsor contribute to the quality of life in a cultural, intellectual and physical sense. With the increase in leisure time and the technological advances in communication over the past twenty years, the colleges have become increasingly important community resources in non-metropolitan centres throughout Canada. The colleges, particularly in rural areas, have had an impact upon the practical concept of lifelong education. While adult and continuing education are not the sole prerogative of colleges, the potential for greatly enriched programs is evident in communities where the new colleges are located. Most administrators regard a wide and varied credit and non-credit program of community education as an important part of the college mandate. By responding to this mandate important social, cultural and intellectual benefits have been brought to smaller communities across Canada.

All of these general considerations have been important in defining

the community college concept. However, it is also important to note that all of these "raisons d'être" are highly pragmatic, products of a changing context, and vulnerable to economic, political and social changes in society. This pragmatism represents the strength of the college system; it is also its weakness as one looks to the next decade.

As suggested earlier, community colleges enjoy few of the historical and philosophic arguments which have conferred status upon the universities. The traditional notions of academic freedom and autonomy have not been inherited by the colleges. In Canada, the community colleges exist as "new" democratic institutions, modelled on one dimension of the American approach to tertiary education in a society which still tends to value an essentially traditional view of "real" higher education.

Given the conditions which gave rise to the community college concept in Canada, it is appropriate to comment upon certain kinds of societal change during the last five years which may have important implications for the survival of the colleges.

The Forces of Change

The early 1970s ushered in a new era for college systems in Canada. A series of events culminated in a state of anxiety at all levels of tertiary education. Public support for education beyond secondary school, which had seemed so entrenched during the "golden" years of the 1960s, began to deteriorate. No longer did it appear that society regarded such education as the certain route to economic reward. The spectre of the unemployed university or college graduate, as often portrayed by the news media, became an issue. Although the validity of the concern was

open to question, and indeed the unemployment statistics presented a different story, support for tertiary education was adversely affected. Predictably, political decision makers, ever sensitive to public opinion, responded by assigning a lower priority to the budgetary allocations for post-secondary education. Education surrendered the media spotlight to the more pressing social and economic problems such as energy, unemployment, inflation and the environment. During the same period even the more vocationally oriented programs in tertiary institutions lost popularity with a new wave of students who embraced social and humanistic, rather than material values.

All of this was accompanied by important demographic changes. The number of high school graduates, a critical factor in predicting student enrollments, declined gradually. Even more alarming to educational planners was evidence that the percentage of the 18-24 age group enrolled in tertiary institutions also began to fall. (Tansig, 1981) For reasons which could only be speculated upon, the attraction of better jobs and salaries through more advanced education, which had dominated the previous decade, was losing its appeal.

Studies conducted at this time indicated that a new clientele of mature members of the community was seeking further educational opportunity, albeit often on a part-time basis. (Humphreys & Porter, Note 2) While this segment of the population represented an important potential source of growth in college and university enrollments, the institutions were typically reluctant to accommodate this phenomenon by removing the traditional barriers to admission of the older, "unqualified" students.

In many universities, the part-time student was regarded with suspicion, as being an "uncommitted" scholar and thus less desirable than the full-time college-age applicants. Tradition and institutionalization were, as is often the case, powerful deterrents to change. While there has been considerable progress in this regard over the past few years, and several universities and selected faculties have adopted more liberal and creative admission policies, many university programs are still inaccessible to part-time study. (Leslie, 1980)

Educational institutions also experienced rapid and often unpredictable fluctuations in demand for specific programs of study. While the most dramatic instability has been in teacher supply and demand, other faculties affected include engineering, forestry, and certain branches of the liberal arts. At the same time, business, accountancy, and computer studies have been confronted with an oversupply of applicants. The implications for faculty mobility and facilities planning from these fluctuations in demand are clear.

Also, a gradual undercurrent of public dissatisfaction with tax levels and use of this money by governments has erupted in formal and informal contexts. The "taxpayer's revolt" in the United States has received considerable publicity and the demand for "accountability" has emerged in other ways. Educational institutions are being required to document their cases for financial support, justify their increasing budgets, and restyle their public images.

While all levels of tertiary education have been affected by these events, the college sector has perhaps endured more stress. The universities in Canada, largely as a result of their status by tradition,

their support from the professional community and their particular form of autonomy, have survived with steady, but not insignificant changes in their "modus operandi". (Tetlow & Taylor, 1981) By convention, the universities are expected to heed, but not necessarily serve changing governmental and social priorities. On the other hand, the colleges, as pragmatic, responsive social institutions, have been intensively scrutinized and made to justify their enrollments, their financial accounts and their programs. If the college systems are to survive in the Eighties, and retain the reformist ideals and commitment to community needs which sustained them for the first two decades, they must meet the challenges with strategies quite different from that of the university sector.

Strategies for Survival

The "wave of change" which has characterized Canadian post-secondary education in the last five years was preceded by a similar phenomenon in the United States. Given the cultural and economic relationship between the two countries, it is not surprising that traditional indicators such as inflation, unemployment and fiscal constraint gradually migrate northward, while the related phenomena of enrollment fluctuations, changing demand for particular academic programs, teacher supply and demand and the budgetary priorities of governments towards higher education follow suit. In 1975, a Carnegie Foundation study published in the United States addressed the issue of the future survival of Higher Education. (Carnegie Foundation, 1975) The most frequent recommendations included a retrenchment approach to new and current programs,

courses, and personnel and capital resources, with attention devoted to job training initiatives and marketing techniques designed to strengthen public support for the system.

The major recommendations sound all too familiar in the Canada of 1982--the need to prepare institutional plans to ensure flexibility in budgets, allocation of faculty and space and the creation of a climate receptive and conducive to change. While there is much in the Carnegie study from which Canadian education might benefit, the answers are far from complete. As noted earlier, the community college in Canada has had a much shorter history of development, has grown more rapidly, and is rooted in a socio-cultural, economic and educational environment which provides a sufficient degree of uniqueness to demand creative Canadian solutions to its problems.

The first and most demanding task for Canadian community colleges is one which has bedevilled them since their inception--the issue of "identity"! The colleges have labored under a variety of misconceptions in the public view. They are <u>not</u> "junior" universities, they are <u>not</u> upward extensions of the secondary school <u>nor</u> are they expanded vocational institutes--but they are perceived as any or all of these! The immediate challenge for the colleges is to delineate in clear and unequivocal terms their mission and mandate as comprehensive, highly accessible community oriented educational institutions which respond to the needs of a widely heterogeneous student population and allocate their highest priority to their students through quality teaching and individualized learning.

However, it is one task to interpret a role, it is quite another to realize it. Many colleges have both inherited and incorporated characteristics which are drawn either from (1) the university model, or (2) the vocational school tradition which formed their nucleus. In the first case, the demand for tenure, for university-like instructional formats, for student selection procedures based on traditional measures, for punitive grading practices, for academic senates and for isolation from community influences, have been antithetical to the realization of a college identity. In the second instance, the resistance to a general education component for vocational students, for the preservation of limited "hands on" skill learning and the suspicion of initiatives designed to professionalize faculty, have all contributed to the charge that colleges merely supply manpower for business and industry.

The challenge of melding traditional academic and vocational values into a fully comprehensive and unique educational enterprise is an extraordinarily difficult task and one which is still far short of accomplishment, particularly in Quebec and British Columbia. (Soles, Note 3) However, the college "identity" is, in part, rooted in the realization of such a meld. Educational leadership of the highest quality will be demanded if it is to succeed.

Another factor which has militated against the colleges' establishment of a real identity has been their growth during the late sixties and seventies. It is no small irony that the colleges have become victims of their own success. Unsure of their real mission, they have continued to respond to the seemingly unlimited demands for new programs, new courses and new services from a public which has set few limits upon

its expectations. The growth in social service programs, particularly, has encouraged the "all-things-to-all-people" concept and has created a serious dilemma for colleges in the new era of fiscal restraint. No longer able to meet the expectations which they themselves have encouraged, the colleges have suddenly been forced to re-examine their central mission and redefine their mandate.

In the decade to come, the prime strategy for survival of the community colleges will involve a painful, honest and deliberate delineation of what they really are and how they will respond. Their survival will depend upon a societal view of them as imaginative, innovate educational institutions which are truly sensitive to the realities of Canada in the Eighties. In particular, college faculty must develop a role which is consistent with the notion of the community college as an educational institution in its own right. It may well be a role which gives a different perspective to the meaning of tenure, to instructional flexibility, to the specificity of skill training and to the assessment and evaluation of student progress and achievement. Further, college faculty may be forced to develop relations with the business and industrial world which erode the traditional norms of autonomy and independence. As long as Canada's community colleges are weighed and measured by yardsticks designed for different kinds of educational institutions they will never be fully understood or appreciated. Their future lies in the realization of a new identity where the measure of their excellence is not how much they do but in how well they perform the things they claim to do.

Paul Gallagher, in an unpublished essay, described the "culture"

of the public community college (Gallagher, Note 4). While noting that for the fifteen years of their existence colleges have been "practitioners of trial and error" they have suffered from a lack of distinctive identity, not only in the public mind, but in the minds of many of their own members. Gallagher proposes that several characteristics distinguish the community college from other post-secondary institutions and these characteristics collectively form the "culture" of the college. In the writer's view community colleges are "public" in every sense, they are cooperative members of an educational "network" which stresses accessibility, diversity and are learner centred. Unlike other institutions, colleges must accept the notion that neither the student nor what is to be learned is constant, factors which must lead to responsiveness among those who teach in the college setting. It is in these, and through other perceptions, that the real identity of Canada's community colleges will be drawn. The realities of the Eighties will demand that these ideas either be translated into practice or the college concept will wither into obscurity.

A second strategy which the colleges must design is one which has elements of both fate and coincidence. In 1982 the federal government outlined two initiatives which could bring a new sense of purpose to the community colleges across the nation. The first initiative stems from the Office of the Secretary of State and involves the identification of national goals as a condition of its continued funding of post-secondary education. (Regan, 1981) The second initiative, by no means unrelated, came with the tabling of a new piece of federal legislation

directed at programs for job training. (House of Commons, 1982) It seems reasonable to suggest that much of the future survival of the colleges will rest with their responses to the new federal challenges.

It would be unrealistic to deny that the federal government's actions noted above were neither anticipated nor appreciated. For almost thirty years Ottawa has borne an increasing responsibility for the funding of post-secondary education with neither the visibility nor the direct control of the dispersal of the money. However, political factors aside, the next few years will require far different responses from provincial governments and tertiary institutions than has been customary if the current level of federal funding is to be maintained.

Many of the national goals have a special relevance for the community college. In particular, the notions of accessibility, the development of a Canadian consciousness, an educated citizenry, and equity of opportunity and mobility are important to institutions which attract a wide and diverse segment of Canadian society. It is appropriate to note that much of the curricular content of Canadian studies has been developed and tested in the college setting.

Gallagher (Note 5), in "Direction for the Year 2000", addressing the issue of pan-Canadian consciousness, notes that while universities will continue to engage in scholarly examination of the issues and the schools may lay foundations, it is the colleges which are in the unique position to bring public issues into the public arena. Certainly, the clientele of the community college is broadly representative of the diversity of society.

In the pursuit of greater accessibility to educational opportunity the colleges again have the potential to realize the goal. As the universities must respond to fiscal constraint by greater limitation of access, the colleges can provide real opportunity for the educationally disadvantaged.

In the context of Canada's new National Training Program, the colleges have a primary and major role--but only if the will to respond prevails. Given the current limitations of forecasts of occupational need, colleges which are sympathetic to their communities have an important contribution to make towards the planning process. The challenge to mount priority programs, to respond to needs of special groups such as women, Native people and the handicapped, and to the development of cooperative ventures with industry, are all within the capabilities of imaginative colleges and are eligible for funding support.

It may well be that colleges in certain provinces will explore these new initiatives with limited provincial government encouragement or even tacit resistance. Several scenarios are viable and the possibilities are intriguing. However, the real issue is whether the community colleges can capitalize successfully upon these new directions while retaining their own integrity and purpose. The strategy which is adopted will bear heavily upon their future.

Another strategy which invites discussion is one which follows from the issue of identity noted earlier. It deals with the question of who the colleges will serve and how it will serve them. The "open door" policy has unquestionably resulted in a wide diversity in student backgrounds and characteristics, but it is doubtful whether the instructional

techniques have always reflected the range of student qualities. A recent study in British Columbia provided some insights into this problem. (Dennison, Forrester & Jones, 1982) Although originally designed to examine the behavior of students in "university transfer" programs who failed to enter university, the study unearthed unanticipated data on the kinds of students enrolled in 1981, their goals, expectations and values. In brief, the "new" students are mature, part-time and predominantly female. Many seek personal enrichment, rather than traditional academic goals, and often question the current scheduling and modes of instruction.

A different but related issue deals with the perceived isolation of colleges from industry and the concern from the latter with lack of college response to the "real" demands of the workplace. Both examples reflect the community colleges' tendency to persevere with techniques characteristic of traditional universities rather than seek a unique style. Two issues need to be addressed in the future. The first deals with a determination as to which students are better accommodated by a variety of other resources. It is conceivable, for example, that students seeking traditional academic programs should proceed directly to universities and colleges should become real alternatives, rather than provide relative duplications of the university model. It may well be that community education of the recreational "credit-free" variety could be more efficiently offered by school boards, YMCA's, community centres and semi-private agencies. High school completion and similar pre-tertiary programs may well be beyond the mission of the colleges. Similarly, certain types of a specialized job training may be more

appropriate under the aegis of private industry than in college shops.

Conversely, there are potential student populations for whom the colleges are well equipped to serve and who have been given inadequate attention in the past. Such groups might include those with adult learning disabilities, women returning to work outside the home, senior citizens, native people, the handicapped and the academically capable but intellectually immature students.

The second issue concerns the ways college students are provided with learning opportunities. Evidently the established classroom schedules are inappropriate for many students, as are the times and locations of class meetings. New approaches may well include creative arrangements based upon distance learning formats rather than by duplicating such techniques as often characterizes current practice.

Both issues eventually revert to the question of the uniqueness of the college in relation to the more traditional institutions. For example, college faculty must eventually accept roles far different from their previous experience. New structural relations with industry, business and learner groups may well form the basis of a community college model as yet undefined.

Recently, a meeting of chief executive officers from college systems across Canada met in Ottawa to discuss mutual concerns. (Report of Colloquium, Note 6) It was noted that during the current period of budgetary restraint colleges have had to reject as many as half to four-fifths of the applicants for several programs. Clearly, this situation calls for a reassessment of curricula and student priorities along the lines noted earlier in the article. A continuation of the

current approach will only result in frustration and disillusionment from both the institutions and the communities they serve.

Finally, the continuation of the period of fiscal restraint which is so confidently predicted for educational enterprises invites one final strategy designed to generate public support. It is the need for colleges to document in precise terms the economic and social benefits which accrue to the communities in which colleges are located. Such benefits range from the direct dispersal of payrolls and the employment of local resources in the supply of college services, to the less direct benefits related to the enrichment of community life and culture provided by college personnel and activities.

The literature on the economics of Canadian higher education is rich with diverse arguments for the returns on the investment in education. (Stager, 1982) As recently as 1982, for example, the University of British Columbia reported that it generated 300 million dollars directly for the economy of the province, a figure well in excess of its operating budget. (Gibson, 1982)

Given the close relationship which exists between colleges and their surrounding communities, it should not be difficult to document the financial benefits which accrue to the latter from the presence of the college. Particularly in rural regions, faculty members tend to reside locally and payrolls are dispersed accordingly. Further, colleges employ a wide variety of human and material resources from the community in their day-to-day operations.

Rarely has serious attention been given to activity in this sphere. Perhaps as a result of complacency during the "growth" years or perhaps

because of the sophisticated techniques required, the colleges have produced little of these kinds of data. However, their future success may well rest in the levels of political priorities which reflect public support. The particular design of the community colleges gives them every opportunity to document their case.

A college identity for the next decade can only be accomplished in the context of the social and political climate in which the college concept was formulated. In Canada, this implies an understanding of the two forces described earlier--the conservative image held by society of a university, modelled largely within the British tradition, and the more radical, egalitarian, democratic post-secondary educational institutions found in the United States. Recognition must be given to the variety of pragmatic goals which colleges were expected to achieve during the period of their conception. As socio-cultural imperatives change, as political agencies reassess their priorities and as the demographic pattern of society fluctuates, the community colleges must redefine their roles in the context of their history. While the omens forecast a difficult future for Canadian education in general, and the tertiary level in particular, the community college sector has every reason to be optimistic.

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